



ALBION RECORDS

ALBION RECORDS • LONDON • ENGLAND

A company that acts as both recording outlet and management to a small but highly select enclave. Pays to keep the whole thing under one umbrella, making for less hassles all round.

Albion's hottest news has to be Hazel O'Connor, actress, singer, dancer and one-time au pair. One of Britain's best-known new faces, she burst on to the scene last year, starring in the movie *Breaking Glass*, with *Quadrophenia* star Phil Daniels. The story is a more realistic version of *Rock Follies*, looking at the rise of a lady rock star. The LP of the same name has gone gold, and two singles, 'Give Me An Inch' and 'Eighth Day', have both been chart hits. Hazel's new album, *Sons and Lovers*, was produced by Nigel Gray, who also does the Police. A face and a talent to be reckoned with.

Chris Stamey's previous gigs include an obscure but not unrecognised pop band called the Sneakers, and some gigging and recording with Box Top and Big Star Alex Chilton. Now Stamey leads a band called the dB's, and the critics are impressed. Clean, commercial pop, very like the Move or the Raspberries, but not without its quirky touches. Their debut LP is *Stands For Decibels*.

999 have been around since 1976, and have been associated with Albion for about as long. They were a hard-core punk band in the early days, and many critics were prepared to write them off when the climate in Britain began to change. But 999 disappeared to America, where they played to sell-out houses. They returned in 1979 and astounded audiences with their evolved sound. Their third LP, *The Biggest Prize In Sport*, has sold impressively in the USA, where they're a major live attraction.

Ian Gomm is an unassuming guy who was last noticed



HAZEL O'CONNOR

working alongside Nick Lowe in the seminal Brinsley Schwarz. Despite being overshadowed by his former workmate, Ian is quite capable of holding his own in the singing and songwriting field. A charming feller.

The Members need no introduction to New Zealanders, who voted theirs the best gig of 1979. They've now switched from Virgin to Albion, and their new sound is probably best described as 'English funk.' It's certainly changed from the days of 'Solitary Confinement', but you'll soon be able to judge for yourselves when their new single, 'Working Class Girl' is released.

PVK RECORDS

PVK pulled off a big coup when they managed to sign Peter Green, back from many years in the wilderness. Stories abounded about Green after he walked out of Fleetwood Mac in 1970. He'd apparently turned his back on music, sold his guitars, and gone heavily overboard for religion. He emerged from time to time in different places, working different menial jobs, but his legend lived on as perhaps the greatest British blues guitarist ever. He finally decided to return to recording in 1977,

after a period in a private rehabilitation centre. He resisted signing with any large labels, turning instead to PVK where the lack of hype made him feel more secure. Since then, Peter has made a quiet but impressive comeback, recording three albums, *In The Skies*, *Little Dreamer* and *Whatcha Gonna Do?* All are low-key affairs, but they leave little doubt that he's still got the magic touch.

Duffo would be one of the wierdest signings any label has made, with only PVK being brave enough. The strange expatriate Aussie describes himself as 'totally asexual' and 'a real exhibitionist.' He's been booted offstage and attacked more often than not, being given to outlandish, sometimes blatantly offensive displays. He enjoys provoking people. Visually, he's obviously well influenced by early David Bowie. Musical satire with very trashy backing is his style, and people are now starting to applaud rather than abuse. See what you think on his first album for PVK, *Bob The Birdman*.

Brian Knight is an unsung leader of British R&B, a low-key performer regarded as one of the foremost exponents of slide guitar in Europe. He plays with the likes of Charlie Watts, Ian Stewart and Dick Hexstall-Smith. They say you can judge a man by the company he keeps ...



Statik Records are one of those bright and thriving little independent labels that abound in Britain these days. Numero Uno is Laurie Dunn, once a leading light in Virgin, who decided to go it alone. Statik's main attraction is *Positive Noise*, a frontrunner in the clutch of exciting new Scottish bands, better known as the Tartan Wave. *Positive Noise* have made a major impression

on the independent record charts with their single 'Give Me Passion'. Their first LP, *Heart Of Darkness*, is now out.

New Age Steppers are a mixed bag of shifting personnel, blending influences that vary from roots reggae to free jazz. Their line-up includes Neneh Stepper, daughter of famed trumpeter Don Cherry, and George Oban, one-time bassist for Aswad. Their debut, self-titled album has had wide acclaim, and the follow-up, *Action Battlefield*, is just out on Statik. The modern dance begins here.



Born of Manchester, raised on industry, and it damn near took a caesarean to get it out here. RTC managed it, and the time it took was not due to lack of effort. Factory operates virtually as a co-operative. Its mainmen are TV personality Tony Wilson, producer Martin Hannett, Alan Erasmus, designer Peter Saville (who did the Joy Division sleeves), and the same band's manager, Rob Gretton. All four draw an annual income share rather than a salary. It took many months of negotiations to gain distribution rights here. Distribution even at home is notoriously erratic. But the wait was worth it, and two successive number one singles prove that.

Joy Division heads the list, even though now defunct. As so often happens with modern music, the tragic irony of the death of Ian Curtis has only added to the aura that surrounds them. 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' and 'Atmosphere' need no embellishment here. *Unknown Pleasures* and *Closer* are already available. Both are precious. The remaining members now comprise New Order, whose 'Ceremony' single continues the legacy. Also on the way is an un-

released and live JD album, *Still*.

A Certain Ratio have been innovators in the Brit-Funk movement. Its members are shy and disinclined to talk, but they're highly respected in the dance circles. Grace Jones has worked with them, though the results have yet to emerge. Their 'Do the Du' single shows how they understand black rhythms, without being patronising. Watch for their LP, *To Each*.

Durutti Column are a studio collaboration between guitarist Vini Reilly and Martin Hannett. Their album *Return Of Durutti Column* is a hazy, eccentric instrumental work that George Benson would have recorded if he'd had the good fortune to be born in Manchester. Reilly is notoriously reclusive and has had a very messy personal life. He sometimes plays live, most recently with Bill Nelson.

AURA

Another small but exquisite label, featuring two of music's most exquisite ladies, Nico and Annette Peacock. Nico came to fame in the 1960's with the Velvet Underground, and later recorded some classic solo albums, including *Chelsea Girl* and *The End*. Her rich Teutonic voice (she's German by birth) and harmonium accompaniment gave her music a hymn-like quality. For her first Aura album, *Drama Of Exile*, she uses a conventional band, spinning a palpable atmosphere with some of her best singing in years.

Annette Peacock has functioned on the fringes of rock and jazz for some time, often living only by her wits and the charity of friends. Her 'I'm The One' attracted the attention of David Bowie and Mick Ronson, both of whom covered it. Annette deserves a wider audience, but she's not about to compromise herself to get it.

Her new album is entitled *The Perfect Palace* and it's in the 1981 Book Of Rock.